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A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

The GOVERNORS of

The Northampton Infirmary,

AT THE

PARISH CHURCH of ALL-SAINTS,

NORTHAMPTON,

SEPTEMBER 24, 1789.

By JOSEPH JEKYLL RYE, A. B.

Vicar of DALLINGTON, and Chaplain to LORD CATHCART.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

By JOSEPH JEKYLL, ESQ.

Master of Requests, and Chamberlain to Her Grace the Duchess

LONDON:

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1 THESSALONIANS iv. 9.

But as touching Brotherly Love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourſelves are taught of God to love one another.

RAPT into future times the venerable apoſtle St. Paul beheld, with prophetic diſcernment, the remarkable change to be experienced by men, under the benign influence of Chriſtianity. He perceived that the evils of the moral world would be conſiderably amended, and that the miſery in which the diſobedience of our firſt parents had involved their poſterity we ſhould be empowered to alleviate, by ſubjugating to the controul of Reaſon and Religion, thoſe violent and impetuous paſſions, which, in the days of paganiſm, either from a relaxed or a licentious worſhip, poſſeſſed an unlimited ſway.

If we carry back our ideas to the ages preceding Chriſtianity, even to ſuch poliſhed and enlightened ſtates as Athens

and Rome, we ſhall not find thoſe inſtances of beneficence and charity, by which the Chriſtian Religion is ſo honourably diſtinguiſhed. Their codes of moral laws were extremely defective, and that defect was not wholly remedied by the productions of their moſt eminent moraliſts, who tolerate or even countenance vices, which Chriſtianity under the ſevereſt penalties forbids. To the milder virtues which ſhine forth in the religion of Jeſus, very little regard was paid. Humility was by them conſidered as a mark of baſe and abject minds. A vindictive pride diſdaining to paſs over injuries, they thought characterized true greatneſs. Ambition, the ſource of diſcord and unhappineſs to one part of the globe, was among the warlike deſcendants of Romulus, cheriſhed and maintained. To lay waſte vaſt provinces, to deſolate rich countries, to extirpate whole nations, or to leave only the feeble and helpleſs to deplore the ſad conſequences of their ambition, to them was the object of deſire, the glory they panted to obtain. Like wild beaſts they furiouſly, they wantonly ravaged the countries they explored; their footſteps were marked with blood. Where military glory appeared the prime and immediate road to civil honours, occaſions for war were anxiouſly ſought, and too eaſily ſupplied. In ſeven centuries from the foundation of their city, twice only could they pretend to a total ceſſation from hoſtilities, and ſhut their temple of Janus,

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as a teſtimony of their tranquillity; ſo practiced were they in carnage, ſo inceſſantly occupied in the extinction of the human ſpecies. With ideas thus ſubverſive of the happineſs of ſurrounding nations, they had little leiſure to contemplate, and little inclination to redreſs, the real calamities of ſome thouſands of their fellow-citizens. While ſchemes of grandeur obtained ſolely the public attention, the lower claſſes of mankind experienced without notice, the pain and anguiſh incident to their ſituation, and no comfort, no aſſiſtance was afforded in the extremities of poverty and diſeaſe. But Chriſtianity, upon it's introduction into the world, ſoon diſplayed it's ſalutary effects, by taming the fierce barbarian into man, and forming him to mildneſs, moderation, charity, and love. He was taught to feel for the unfortunate of every clime and country, and in the exerciſe of thoſe virtues to be ſwayed by no national, no religious prejudices. He was not to be chilled by cold unfeeling ſelfiſhneſs, nor to be frozen into abſolute indifference about the welfare of his fellow-creatures. He was to diſclaim that boaſted apathy, ſo much extolled and recommended by ſome of their ancient ſages. He was inſtructed to feel, rather than philoſophiſe; to imitate the example of the Saviour of the World, who in going about to do good, did not diſdain, on various occaſions, to expreſs thoſe affections and paſſions which are a conſtituent part of human nature, and

which, though required to be kept within proper bounds, are not to be eradicated. That Sacred Guide, on a foreſight of the calamities falling on his devoted country, could experience warm emotions of pity in the public cauſe. He could alſo yield an amiable teſtimony, that even private ſorrows merited commiſeration, and mingle tears with thoſe of the near relations of Lazarus.

To the force of his precepts, to the energy of his character, are we indebted for the numerous ſtructures for charitable purpoſes, that in this kingdom inconteſtably mark a ſpirit of beneficence, and prove the ſuperior efficacy of the Chriſtian Religion, in mitigating the pangs of miſery and conſoling the ſorrows of the afflicted, to all the cold maxims and ill-directed ſtudies of pagan philoſophy, which vainly might inculcate a contempt of pain, while they failed to relieve it. But in our own country the humane, the valuable effects of Revelation are rendered conſpicuous, and therein the moſt eminent of the heathen nations are confeſſedly our inferiors. Aſylums, not as ſanctuaries for criminals, are eſtabliſhed, but for thoſe diſtreſſes to which the mean and the unfortunate are liable in every ſtage of life; forlorn infancy here finds a protector; infirm and diſaſtrous age is comforted by ſupport. What various hoſpitals owe their riſe to thoſe humane feelings we now are permitted

mitted to indulge, to thoſe charitable principles we now by divine precept, are recommended to obſerve. Each county, each city furniſhes ſome, if not numerous inſtances; and we, on this occaſion, celebrate the inſtitution of our own excellent infirmary, which has rendered back to their country, in priſtine health and vigour, ſo many ſerviceable citizens, that, but for ſuch timely aid, had become burdenſome members, or elſe been totally loſt to ſociety.

Thus does Chriſtianity ſupply reſources to the neceſſitous and wretched in the kind contributions of their wealthier and more fortunate fellow creatures. But pagan morality, peculiarly harſh and ſevere, provided no retreats for miſery, ſuggeſted no relief from woe, but in the vain attempts at annihilation, the gloomy horrors of ſuicide; a remedy violent as it proves ineffectual, and which our purer religious tenets, while they render needleſs, teach us both to dread and abhor.

By thoſe tenets is the moſt univerſal philanthropy inculcated and encouraged; the exertions thereof become more frequent, as religion teaches them to be requiſite. That religion that points out to us the cloſe connection of mankind, as the offspring of one common parent, informs us alſo that there is one Lord, one Father of all, who enjoins a ſtrict obſervance

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of thoſe ties, who to the bonds of nature adds the influence of divine commands, to induce us to regard all men as brethren, and to ſympathize in the ſorrows of even the meaneſt of that family, of which we find ourſelves conſtituent members. It becomes a duty to view the ſufferings of others with compaſſion, to relieve them by advice, conſolation and alms, and every virtuous method, that may tend to ſmooth the aſperities of their journey through life; and prevent them from murmuring at the diſpenſation of providence, by which ſuch unequal diſtributions of human benefits are permitted and ordained. For as we ſee the light of the goſpel abundantly diffuſed over parts of the globe, while on others it feebly ſhines, or is totally obſcured; ſo with reſpect to individuals, far different are the allotted enjoyments, moſt diſproportionate the goods and ills that they are deſtined to experience. Various gradations in the rank of men are neceſſary for the well-being of ſociety. To each is his ſeveral part aſſigned; and as a member of a community, of which he cannot live independent, he is bound to contribute ſomething to its emolument, either by act, precept, or example.

But the inferior claſſes of men have little capacity or leiſure for ſuch abſtract reaſoning upon the moral fitneſs of things. They feel the neceſſity of diſcharging their ſeveral functions for the

the ſake of ſuſtenance, and therefore ſubmiſſively engage in the taſk. Yet of far the greater number ſuch is the ſituation, that even in the vigour of life their moſt ſtrenuous exertions are ſcarcely more than adequate to the ſupply of immediate wants. Though they go forth to their labour at the dawn of day, and return not till fatigue and the ſetting of the ſun compel them to retreat; though their lives are exhauſted in the ſervice of more opulent brethren, yet of little beyond preſent ſubſiſtence are their toils productive. Much leſs then againſt the day of calamity can they make a competent proviſion for medicine in thoſe maladies by which they may be afflicted; for aid in thoſe caſualties by which they may be diſabled; to no ample ſtores can they reſort; to no prodigious fruits of unremitted induſtry. If they languiſh or totally ſink beneath their diſtreſſes, a community ſo frequently deprived of it's moſt ſerviceable members, muſt acknowledge their loſs to be irreparable. To obviate therefore ſo ſerious an ill, is conſiſtent with the ſoundeſt policy, excluſively of it's concurrence with the dictates of our religion. To yield occaſional aſſiſtance to thoſe who are engaged in the ſeverer conflicts of adverſity, is a duty incumbent upon every one who can be ſwayed by Chriſtian or by ſocial motives. As the rational, the public-ſpirited, and the pious feel the influence of theſe ideas, they act conformably to the generous principle that excites them; and ſince from ſuch

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cauſes many eminently charitable foundations derive their origin; any failure in their promotion and maintenance is inconſiſtent both with political wiſdom and religious duty.

Of the ſeveral modes adopted for ſuch prudent and pious purpoſes, none ſeems more calculated to anſwer the propoſed ends, than the eſtabliſhment of public infirmaries. If it is true, according to the words of Moſes, "that the poor ſhall never "ceaſe out of the land," and we are perſuaded and enjoined "to open our hand wide unto our brother, to our poor and "to our needy therein," we neither willingly nor properly ſelect the indolent or the vicious as objects deſerving ſuch attentions. Profuſely and indiſcriminately to laviſh that bounty we mean to render beneficial, if it is not a criminal act, is certainly an injudicious one. Real woes are ſo attendant on the frail and feeble nature of man, and the events of life are ſo little to be regulated by human foreſight, that the virtuous, the diligent, and the unoffending characters are often involved in diſtreſs, and appear the beſt claimants to the donations of the liberal. It is to be hoped that all charitable endowments whatſoever are thus wiſely and duly employed. That it is really the caſe with infirmaries we have every reaſon to conclude, from the nature of their eſtabliſhment, and from the end to which their revenues are appropriated. Calamity, whatſo-

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ever be its aſpect is always grievous; yet it never appears ſo pungent, as when exaſperated by diſeaſe. The ſtings of poverty are always keen, but operate with additional force, when ſharpened by ſickneſs and encroaching maladies. To have toiled for ſubſiſtence, yet to be overtaken by want; to have exerted the powers of induſtry, yet to receive the reward of ſloth, is a melancholy recompence for virtue; yet that recompence would too frequently attend it's endeavours, did not the well-directed hand of bounty interpoſe, and furniſh timely and requiſite aſſiſtance. The erection and ſupport of hoſpitals has decidedly this tendency. Though the legal proviſions for our poor are in many caſes competent to their neceſſity, yet many inſtances muſt alſo occur, to which they are inadequate. The ſupplies of pariſhes, if not rigorouſly, muſt yet be frugally diſpenſed. They prevent that meagre famine, which otherwiſe muſt aſſail the indigent; but even where the beſt, the moſt humanely regulated, their attempts to relieve, muſt in ſome caſes prove defective, and fail of the deſired ſucceſs. Sickneſs, diſqualifying for labour, ſoon impoveriſhes a peaſant, or artizan, and compels, however unwilling, to ſeek thoſe ſcanty ſupplies. Medicinal aſſiſtance, ſlowly or parſimoniouſly adminiſtered, irritates the malady, and the languid attentions of men, intent on other avocations, ſoon render it permanent or fatal. For ſuch diſaſters the beſt preventative

ariſes from inſtitutions, ſimilar to that we now are met to promote. A houſe peculiarly allotted to that ſpecies of diſtreſs is, on proper application, the immediate receptacle of the ſufferer. To his complaint unremitted attention is paid, ſuitable remedies are applied, and even to minuter circumſtances, viz. air, exerciſe, diet, neatneſs in apparel, &c. due obſervance is ſhewn. If advice the moſt reſpectable, treatment the beſt adapted to his ſituation and caſe, can reinſtate him in health, he there may be aſſured of their concurrence to effectuate it. Superfluous gratifications are moſt properly withheld; while all neceſſary aids are ſeduloufly provided. Nor are the ſums expended on ſo excellent a work conſiderable as the benefit. At charges the moſt moderate multitudes annually are relieved; and when thus uſefully reſtored to friends, to relations, and to their country, yield ample proofs; how truly rational, how truly charitable is that munificence which at the ſame moment advantages individuals, and confers material benefits on ſociety. The motives then for the humane and ſteady promotions of ſuch an eſtabliſhment, both of a civil and a religious nature, are numerous and cogent. A few whereof in addition to the foregoing arguments may not improperly be adduced to confirm and enforce them. Firſt then;

In works of this deſcription, the liberal intent of the donor is not liable to be fruſtrated by impoſition. He is not credulouſly duped by tales of imaginary woe, by well-wrought fictions of diſtreſs; the objects for whom his charity is ſolicited, are viſibly, palpably deſerving of it; and he feels the exalted pleaſure, derived from the aſſurance, that his talent has not been concealed, that it has been properly applied, and is yielding it's due intereſt in contributing ſo effectually to alleviate the miſeries of his fellow-creatures, by reſcuing them from diſeaſe.

Secondly, The ſupport of hoſpitals is conducive to general utility, by facilitating the ſtudies of medicine and ſurgery; by ſubmitting to the inſpection of the practitioner, the greateſt variety of caſes, and by familiarizing him to the due treatment thereof, from the frequency with which they occur. The obſervance of the diſcriminate ſymptoms, attract the attention, form the ſtudy, improve and perfect the ſkill of the medical character, thus enabling him to verify the theory, of which ſuch practice is properly but the attendant. To novel caſes that may ariſe, ſuch ſkill is reaſonably oppoſed and conſtantly extends it's diſcoveries in the vaſt field of medicine. The extenſion of that knowledge is of uſe to men in general, as no one is exempted from diſeaſe; and each wiſhes that art to be perfected, to which in times of neceſſity he muſt recur.

Again, Infirmaries are aſſiſtant to the promotion of religion and virtue. For many in the inferior claſſes from a vicious or neglected education, or from long and intenſe application to their ſeveral employments, are devoid of due knowledge of the virtuous and pious tenets, that conſtitute the real happineſs of thoſe who retain and obſerve them. The hours of health are conſequently ſpent without one ſerious thought on futurity, too frequently in vice and immorality. The bed of ſickneſs affords much leiſure for reflection. Awakened to the frailty of his nature, alarmed at the awful criſis which advances him to eternal life or death, the ſick man ſhuns not information, but readily imbibes juſt principles of piety, or renovates devotion long relaxed. But yet too often thoſe favourable moments for ſalvation are ſpent in languor and uncertainty from the ignorance, or the timid caution of the friends, who in humble dwellings ſurround the ſick man's bed. The rules of hoſpitals are calculated to obviate ſuch omiſſions. The ſerious ſcene perpetually preſent, indiſputable proofs of human wants and weakneſs, the word of God occaſionally explained, religious tracts intruſted to the peruſal of the leſs infirm, all tend, in the intervals of anguiſh, to inform the uninſtructed, to command the attention of the negligent, to correct the errors of of the miſguided, and confirm the devout.

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As a concluſive and moſt forcible argument in favor of Infirmaries, let us repeatedly advert to the preceptive parts of our holy Religion: "For therein ye yourſelves are taught of "God to love one another;" With a love, not manifeſted by external forms of courteſy, but by benevolent and charitable actions, not by numerous preſents to thoſe from whom you expect abundant retribution, but rather are you to do good to thoſe, ſays ſcripture, who cannot recompence again. "For "whoſo hath this world's goods, and ſeeth that his brother "hath need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from "him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" For of God, a diſtinguiſhing attribute is mercy. In mercy hath he made us all; in mercy did he ſend His Son into the world to reſcue us from ſin; in mercy did he call us to repentance, point out the road to happineſs, and capacitate us to obtain it. He humbled himſelf to behold his creature, man; deigned to heal his infirmities, and to furniſh him with that bright pattern of excellence, whereof as the belief is well-founded, an imitation becomes requiſite. Can we then admire the ſeveral acts of his goodneſs, yet fail to obſerve his precepts, and to acknowledge the efficacy of his example? Can we extol his condeſcenſion in regarding with pity our wretchedneſs? Can we ſolicit a continuance of his mercy, yet ourſelves prove blind to the ſorrows of our fellow-creatures; deaf to thoſe moans he enjoined us to

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commiſerate, and torpid to thoſe ſtimulants, he intended to operate on the finer feelings of humanity? No! The talent he has beſtowed on any, is not to be ſlothfully or negligently buried; the goods he has given to each are not to be ſelfiſhly engroſſed, or viciouſly employed. The due exerciſe thereof he expects as of a loan intruſted to our improvement; and ſuch improvement is but manifeſted by thoſe, who in obedience to his injunctions, are fruitful in good works.